Bureau of Reclamation Safety of Dams

Lauro Dam Modification Project
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is Lauro Dam?

Lauro Dam and Reservoir are located in the foothills on the north edge of the City of Santa Barbara, east of San Roque Road, and north of Foothill Road. The dam was constructed in 1952 by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) as part of the Cachuma Project. The Cachuma Project also includes Bradbury Dam and Cachuma Lake; Tecolote Tunnel; Ortega Reservoir; Carpinteria Reservoir; and Glen Anne Reservoir. Lauro Dam and Reservoir are part of the South Coast Conduit water distribution system that provides municipal, industrial, and irrigation water to communities on the South Coast, including Goleta, Santa Barbara, Montecito, Summerland, and Carpinteria.

Lauro Dam is an earth-filled structure with a height of 99 feet. The reservoir capacity is about 640 acre-feet. The surface area of the lake when full is about 15.6 acres. The maximum depth of the reservoir is about 56 feet. Lauro Reservoir receives water from Cachuma Lake via the Tecolote Tunnel which passes through the Santa Ynez Mountains. Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board manages Lauro Dam and Reservoir and other Cachuma Project facilities on the South Coast and at Cachuma Lake under contract to Reclamation. Lauro Dam and Reservoir are located on federal lands which encompass about 70 acres.

2. What are Lauro Dam's Benefits?

The water supply from Lauro Reservoir is used for municipal and industrial purposes, and for agricultural irrigation of high value crops, principally avocado, lemon, and lime orchards. The reservoir meets or regulates the peak water demand of the city of Santa Barbara and the Goleta, Montecito, and Carpinteria Valley Water Districts (Water Users), and is a key facility on the South Coast Conduit. Almost 53 percent, 14,000 acre-feet annually, of the Cachuma Project water used by the Water Users passes through Lauro Reservoir. Total economic benefits of Lauro Dam and Reservoir have been estimated at $31.8 million.

3. What work is being done at Lauro Dam?

The Bureau of Reclamation is modifying Lauro Dam to prevent downstream flooding in the event of an earthquake.

4. What's the problem?

During the excavation of the dam foundation in 1951, a southeast-northwest trending fault zone was observed in the center of the excavation. The fault was not considered a potential hazard at that time. Based on studies completed in 2003, Reclamation has recently determined that there is potential for surface fault displacement through the dam foundation. This could cause dam failure and downstream flooding.

The need for corrective measures to address the identified public risks at Lauro Dam is based on significant changes in the state-of-the-art design and construction techniques since the dam was built.

5. What kinds of studies were done?

Reclamation initiated a Corrective Action Study in July 2002 to determine the best way to reduce risk of dam failure, during which 21 different dam modification alternatives were considered. However, most were quickly rejected due to cost, effects to the environment or because they did not sufficiently reduce the risk to the downstream public. After studying four alternatives in greater detail, a preferred alternative was selected. Other studies that were performed included geologic and seismic studies to better understand possible fault movement.

6. When did construction start?

Construction began in late November 2005.

7. What company is doing the work?

The contractor is AJ Diani Construction Co., Inc., of Santa Maria, California

8. How long will construction take?

Construction is expected to take about 10 months.

9. How much will construction cost?

The construction contract is for about $4 million. Other costs including possible contract modifications, construction management, design, habitat mitigation, environmental studies, and the cost of the corrective action study may result in a total cost of $7-8 million.

10. Will local water users repay any of the cost?

Yes. The Water Users will pay 15 percent of the total project cost under Reclamation's Safety of Dams Program.

11. What effect will construction have on nearby residents and businesses?

It will be necessary to import sand and gravel so there will be increased truck traffic on San Roque road, north of Foothill Road, during some construction periods. The truck entry and exit locations are across from the Cater Water Treatment Plant. Truck trips are limited to the

hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Noise generating construction operations are limited to the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Construction noise is subject to limitations identified in the Environmental Assessment.

Limited construction activities will be allowed on Saturdays. Allowable Saturday work which includes equipment maintenance, surveying, landscaping, and site inspection, may occur between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. No construction or other work is allowed on Sundays and holidays observed by the City of Santa Barbara as official holidays.

Trucks and other construction equipment are required to meet requirements provided by the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District. Dust and erosion controls in accordance with the Environmental Assessment are also requirements of the project. Construction traffic on Laurel Canyon Road is not allowed.

12. What effect will this project have on the Water Users?

The project will have no impact on water use, i.e., no interruption of water deliveries.

13. What effect will this project have on the environment?

The project will have no significant impacts on the environment. Habitat restoration of the construction site includes planting and establishment of oak trees and other native species.

14. Where can I get a copy of the Environmental Assessment for the project?

The Environmental Assessment is available online at www.usbr.gov/mp/sod. Click on Lauro Dam.

15. Will the passageway between Laurel Canyon Road and San Roque Road be available for use by the general public during construction?

During the entire construction period, general public access across the downstream portion of Lauro Dam between Laurel Canyon and San Roque Roads is closed to walking, jogging, hiking, horse back riding, mountain biking, dog walking, stroller walking, etc. The construction contractor will erect a security fence and signage around the project site perimeter for the length of the contract.

16. Who can I call for more information on this project?

Call David Jones, Public Affairs Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation, at 916-978-5108, or contact him via e-mail at: dajones@mp.usbr.gov.